

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	February 28, 2017
SUBJECT:	Review FY 2017/18 Annual Transit Needs Assessment and Preliminary Recommendations (Public Hearing)
AGENDA ITEM:	8
STAFF CONTACT:	Brett Setterfield, Assistant Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

Each year, SRTA assesses and makes recommendations regarding unmet transit needs in the Shasta Region. The Draft Transit Needs Assessment (TNA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017/18 was posted to SRTA's website in January. A public hearing is required. Unmet transit needs findings will be presented to the board of directors at the April 25, 2017, meeting. Recommendations for the allocation of transit funding will be presented to the board of directors at the June 27, 2017, meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors:

1. Hold a public hearing to receive public comments on unmet transit needs;
2. Provide any further direction to staff regarding FY 2017/18 Unmet Transit Needs; and
3. Direct staff to prepare responses to public comments as a prerequisite to approval of the Transportation Development Act (TDA) budget in June.

DISCUSSION:

Background – As a recipient of TDA funds, SRTA is required to administer the annual unmet transit needs process. The purpose of this process is to:

1. Identify potential unmet transit needs in each jurisdiction; and
2. Certify that all reasonable-to-meet transit needs have been met in each jurisdiction, prior to allocating any residual TDA funds for other eligible uses, including local streets and roads.

Transit Needs Assessment – The TNA is composed of the annual unmet transit needs cycle shown in Attachment A. Needs identified through this process are evaluated against the agency's adopted "reasonable to meet" definition. The FY 2017/18 Transit Needs Assessment's key aspects include:

- Identification of transit dependent and transit need populations;
- Community outreach strategies (e.g. social media, SRTA website, mail, brochures, and posters);
- Preliminary findings regarding requested services (e.g. Sunday service, extended service hours, and shorter headways).

Overall RABA Performance – RABA's farebox recovery ratio increased from 16.92% in FY 2014/15 to 17.10% in FY 2015/16. Despite falling below RABA's weighted farebox recovery ratio standard of 17.8%, it is recommended that existing services continue because the system is performing close to the farebox standard and changes to individual routes would result in system-wide impacts. In addition, the current farebox ratio is well-above the minimum 15% threshold where funding penalties are imposed.

Service Recommendations – A total of six unmet transit needs were identified and evaluated as part of last year’s cycle. The following needs have been addressed:

- Crosstown Express service from Downtown Redding to Mt. Shasta Mall – Introduced in September 2016, the service had a total of 432 passengers on 27 service days in December 2016. These numbers may increase as a result of new development, including the Sheraton Redding hotel at the Sundial Bridge and K2 Development’s mixed use project in Downtown Redding. RABA is also considering service adjustments to address low ridership numbers.
- Express service to Cottonwood – Introduced in April 2016, the service had a farebox ratio of 4.51% in December 2016. Without a substantial increase in riders, service will most likely discontinue June 30, 2017. Staff is investigating CTSA service by Shasta Senior Nutrition Program (SSNP) as an alternative, which could start as early as July 1, 2017.
- Seasonal service to Whiskeytown Lake – Service began last summer with a total of 627 riders on 28 service days. Discussions with the National Park Service indicate a desire for continued service next summer. It is anticipated that grants will again fund the service.

Options are currently being evaluated for the remaining three ongoing requests described below:

FY 2017/18 Transit Requests and Recommendations

Transit Service Request	Unmet Transit Need?	Reasonable to Meet?	Response
Sunday service	Yes	Pending Analysis	The SRTA Board of Directors approved funding on December 13, 2016, to design an on-demand Sunday transit service demonstration project. A limited Sunday service could start as soon as July 2018. SRTA is also working with the city of Shasta Lake on designing a similar pilot project in the city.
More frequent service	Yes	No	Needs and service options will be included in the next short-range transit plan anticipated in 2018. It is unlikely that changes could be made system-wide initially, but pilot programs could be introduced in high-use transit areas. A Sunday or city of Shasta Lake on-demand pilot project may also have applicability to these service enhancements.
Extended service hours	Yes	No	

Unlocking the Potential for On-Demand Service – Despite repeated requests, recent new services are underperforming using a conventional fixed-route service model. On-demand transit is currently being considered as an alternative, more cost-effective model for meeting transit needs on Sundays and in the city of Shasta Lake. On-demand service is user-oriented transit service that allows riders to request a service based on a pick-up and drop-off location. Advantages of on-demand transit include:

- Ability to manage costs for fixed-route services with consistently low ridership;
- More direct trips and faster trips;
- Generates valuable data needed to plan more responsive transit services; and
- A more nimble system (can be redesigned and adapt to demand within hours or days rather than months or years).

Public Involvement – The Draft FY 2017/18 Transit Needs Assessment (Attachment B) was posted on the SRTA website and circulated to interested individuals and organizations. Comments may be submitted during the public hearing or delivered to SRTA through March 6, 2017.

Next Steps – Unmet transit needs findings – including all public comments received and staff recommendations – will be presented at the April 25, 2017, board of directors meeting. Once approved, findings will be used to inform the proposed FY 2017/18 TDA budget.

It is recommended that the board of directors conduct a public hearing, provide staff any further direction regarding the FY 2017/18 Unmet Transit Needs Assessment, and direct staff to prepare responses to public comments received.

ALTERNATIVES:

The board of directors may suggest modifications to the preliminary transit recommendations or the transit needs assessment. The board may also extend the public comment period beyond March 6, 2017.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The unmet transit needs process is developed in consultation with the county of Shasta, the three cities, Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee, Shasta Senior Nutrition Program, TAC, and RABA. Documentation of the unmet transit needs process is approved by Caltrans.

FINANCING:

In a typical year, approximately \$3,011,000 in TDA funds are used for transit, and \$4,550,000 are used for non-transit purposes, including streets and roads.


Daniel S. Little, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

Overview of the Annual Unmet Transit Needs Cycle
Draft 2017/18 Transit Needs Assessment available at:
<http://srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/3380>

Overview of the Annual Unmet Transit Needs Cycle

Activity	Schedule			
	Dec-Jan	Feb-March	April-Jun	Beyond
1. Assess current conditions and gather input				
Consult with Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC)	☒			
Review most recent transit plans and prior year Unmet Transit Needs findings. Revise (as needed) analysis on size and location of likely transit dependent populations. Solicit public comments (social media, interviews, etc.) via 'Shasta Transit Brainstorm'	☒			
Based on earlier findings, develop transit service priorities survey to distribute via SRTA website, social media, and other methods	☒			
2. Draft Transit Needs Assessment				
Prepare and publish draft Transit Needs Assessment for a minimum 30-day public comment period		☒		
Hold a public hearing to receive comments on the draft Transit Needs Assessment		☐		
3. Unmet Transit Needs Findings				
Work with appropriate transit provider(s) to develop options for meeting identified unmet transit needs and testing against adopted reasonable to meet criteria				
Present Unmet Transit Needs Findings for the upcoming fiscal year (requests requiring additional analysis are continued to the next fiscal year)			☐	
Allocate TDA funds for transit and non-transit purposes for the upcoming fiscal year			☐	

Attachment A